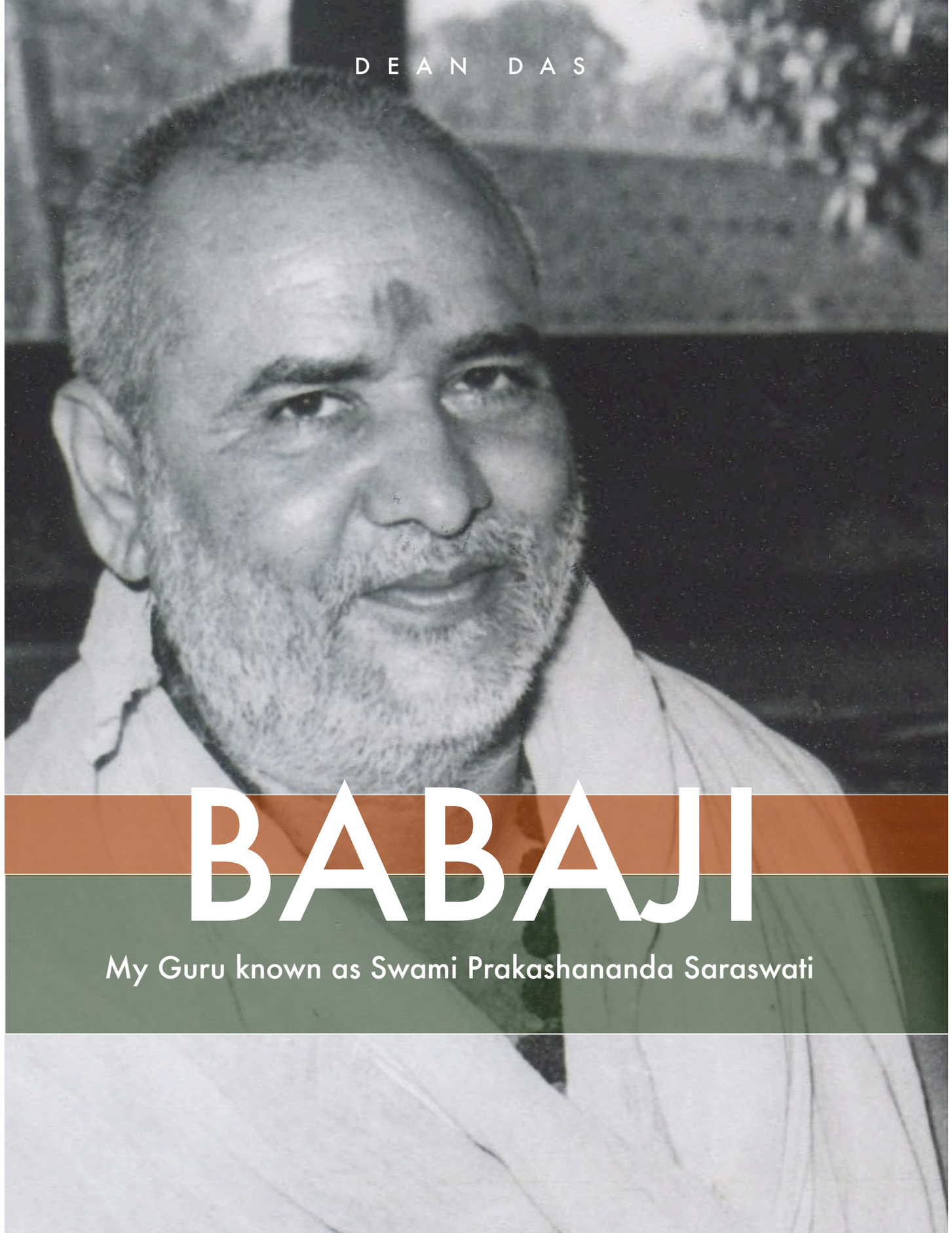
DEAN DAS



BABAJI

My Guru known as Swami Prakashananda Saraswati

Foreword

DEAN DAS LIVED WITH HIS GURU ATOP SAPTA SHRINGI MOUNTAIN FOR SEVERAL YEARS.

BABAJI

Foreword

Dean Das, the author, is a disciple of Swami Prakashananda (Babaji). Over several years he lived with his Guru atop Sapta Shringi mountain, a 4,000 foot high mountain plateau (gadh), 40 kilometres north of Nasik City, in Maharashtra State, Western India.

During the years spent with Swami Prakashananda, Dean Das was favoured with the blessing of the Guru's full 'grace' (anugraha), it being the principal means of attaining to 'Self- Realization'.

Upon his Guru's instructions, Dean Das returned to live in Australia. He lived the life of a householder yogi – raising a child, and working in the fields of academia, clinical mental health, and forensic psychology. At the same time, he also taught 'select' meditation students in the time that was allowed. It is now some 30 years since Swami Prakashananda explicitly instructed Dean Das to: 'at a later stage of your life open Meditation Centres, and publicly teach meditation in my name'.

Mind-Yoga (Aust) is based in Yarraville, Melbourne. The Centre offers meditation/yoga training courses suitable for beginners through to experienced students.

Chapter One

BABAJI

FORMATIVE YEARS

'I was lying in bed next to my grandmother at 8 years of age. It was night. My eyes were closed, but I was not asleep. Then I saw something behind my closed lids. It was a face, a very large face, (like the sister of Balindra, a demon whose face is worn as a mask in Divali, the Festival of Lights). What I see has many arms, in fact 18 arms extended, with a weapon in each hand. Her eyes are wide and blazing bright, and She is dressed in a green sari. She is now gone, and only the stillness of the dark night remains'.

Swami Prakashananda Saraswati, known as Swamiji, or more commonly, Babaji (revered father), was born into a brahmin family (priestly caste) in Karnataka, South-West India, in 1917. He was named Laxman Narayan. When he was just 10 years of age his mother died of Parkinson's disease. Laxman was devastated at the loss of his beloved mother.

At around 16 years of age, Laxman left his village home. Armed with little formal education (Year 8 level), and a restless mind, Laxman began to search for something that might give his life a purpose or meaning. Laxman joined the Indian Independence Movement becoming an ardent follower of its leader, Mahatma Gandhi. He organized Satyagraha marches (non-violent protests), and Kardhi Weaving Centres throughout South-West India in the name of the Congress Party (kardhi is 'hand-spun' cotton, the weaving of which was appropriated by Gandhi as a symbol of Indian Independence from British colonial rule). On a number of occasions these acts of rebellion against colonial rule led to Laxman's arrest and sentencing to jail. But for an Independence Movement revolutionary, arrest was de rigour for the greater cause.

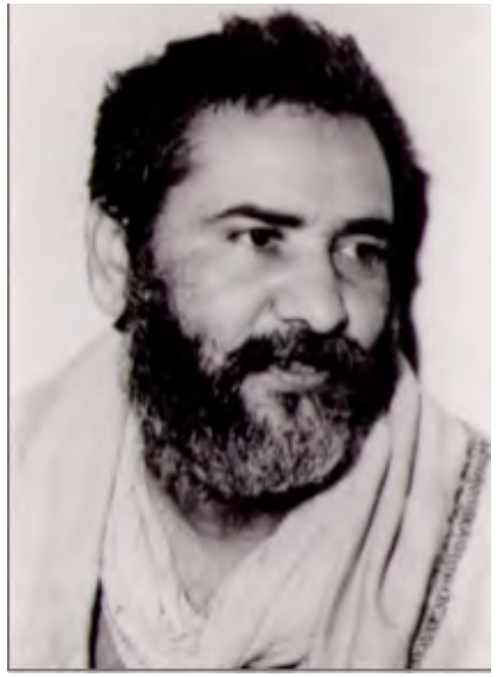
In 1947, India was declared Independent from British rule. Following Independence, in his own words, 'I looked at the fellow to my left, I looked at the fellow to my right. I knew they were no different than those fellows (the British) that we had fought so hard to get rid of'. Laxman had reached a point of disillusionment with the promise of a political career. He had learnt from his contact with the British that 'good heart' and 'bad heart' people belonged to all races and cultures, and remembered many an occasion when he was the recipient of 'good heart' from an Englishman. Immediately following Independence, Laxman witnessed at first hand his political comrades' self-interested motivations in the scramble for newly created Government positions. His fellow political revolutionaries had achieved freedom from the colonial oppressor, the British, yet they remained in servitude to the dictates of their narrow personal ambitions. The world of political machinations had lost its sheen. Consequently, Laxman made the decision to rise above petty self-interest and engage in an internal, rather than an external, revolution. He knew that only when one is freed from the dictates of the personal ego that it would be possible to act with equanimity and 'good heart' toward all beings. In doing so, he could live in harmony with himself, with his fellow human beings, and in harmony with God (Bhagwan).

Laxman had at least solved one part of the equation – where he wanted his life to go. There was still the question of how to attain this lofty goal. As with all Hindus, Laxman was familiar with the life-style of sadhus (India's itinerant

'seekers of truth'). There intention was fine, but a sadhu's 'life-style' did not hold much appeal for Laxman. As with many young men of his time, he did not hold sadhus in particularly high regard. Despite their claim of 'non-attachment' to material things (vairagya), sadhus were often wholly dependent upon the local communities to provide all of their material sustenance. For Laxman this seemed contradictory, if not hypocritical. Was it not hypocritical to be dependent upon others to supply the material needs that you are not prepared to supply for yourself? Laxman was independent by nature. He had supported himself since leaving home at a young age, and his pride and dignity would not permit him to beg for food, clothing, or shelter from others. Laxman was prepared to undergo any type of mental or physical rigours in his search for truth, but not at the cost of becoming a beggar.

Free from the demands of political life, Laxman set-out on what was to become a twenty-five year journey of self-discovery. He lived a sadhu 'life-style', minus the begging. For material survival, Laxman took menial jobs whenever necessary – labouring, washing dishes, or carrying water. For two or three years he sojourned in Goa, Western India, building a reputation as a respected astrologer. He thrice traversed the length and breadth of India from the tip of Kanyakumari in the South, to Lake Manasarovar in Tibet. He ate only when food was offered, and frequently slept under trees. When work did not present itself, Laxman went without food or shelter.

During these extensive yatras (pilgrimages) to holy places, he met and stayed with a number of great yogis (practitioners of yoga), and mahatmas (great souls), including Swami Shivananda of Rishikesh, Anandamayi Ma, the great woman mystic of North India, and Bhagwan Nityananda of Ganeshpuri. Laxman drunk deeply of their spirit, words and actions, and although he did not accept any of the above mahatmas as his personal Guru (the revealer of ultimate reality),



Laxman, a.k.a. Swami Prakashananda Saraswati

he directed his mind toward constant recitation of the names of God (mantra repetition).

Laxman became weary of the constant wandering. His body was tired, and he wished to deepen his meditation practice. He knew that he needed to settle in one place. It was in 1955 that a friend suggested he go to a 4,000 foot high mountain plateau (gadh), 40 kilometres north of Nasik City,

in Maharashtra State, Western India, known as Sapta Shringi Gadh.**1**

Sapta Shringi is an ancient shakti peeth (place of power) associated with the feminine aspect of God, the Divine Goddess (Devi), otherwise referred to as the Mother of the Universe (Jagadamba Mata). At this particular shakti peeth, the Divine Mother takes the form of the Nivasini Devi, the Goddess of 18 Arms.

Sapta Shringi Gadh

1 Refer to Notes

Upon climbing the four and one-half hours up the steep ravines of the Sapta Shringi mountainside, the first thing on Laxman's mind was to pay his respects to the resident Devi, the Nivasini Devi, concealed in her austere rock fortress.

Nivasini Devi Temple, Sapta Shringi

Laxman clambered up the 300 hundred odd, worn stone steps leading to the entrance of the temple. As he did so, 'the temple guards' (the monkeys), watched him as he cautiously passed by and entered the temple precincts. Upon entry, Laxman became transfixed by Her image (murti), and in that moment saw 'a very large face, (like the sister of Balindra, a demon whose face is worn as a mask in Divali, the Festival of Lights). She had many arms, in fact 18 arms extended, with a weapon in each hand. Her eyes were wide and blazing bright, and She was dressed in a green sari'.

There was instant recognition. Laxman knew he had finally come home. Tears of joy filled his eyes and ran down his cheeks. After years of constant wanderings in the heat of Southern India to the freezing vastness of the Tibet plateau, on an austere mountain peak, Laxman had finally rediscovered the Mother who had come to him in a vision at eight years of age. It was now some thirty years later! In Laxman's words, 'the Mother had been with me all the years of wandering. It was She who had protected me and finally brought me back home'. It was from then on that Laxman began to greet whomever he met with the mantra, 'Jai Jagadamba Mataki Jay' ('Greetings to the Universal Mother – who lives within you, as you').

In years subsequent, whenever Babaji recalled this story, tears of love filled his eyes.

In 1955 Laxman began his 27 year residency atop the mountain of Sapta Shringi. This vast mountain terrain was inhabited by a handful of impoverished Brahmin priests tending to temple duties along with a small tribe of jungle people (adivasis).

Nivasini Devi, Sapta Shringi

The Indigenous peoples of the jungle eked-out a precarious living as porters transporting goods up the mountainside for pilgrims visiting the temple (these 'goods' frequently included 'human cargo' such as the portly, the elderly, and the infirm).

For the first seven years Laxman lived in a rock cave known as Nagendra Cave (Lord of Snakes). In later years, Babaji recounted that a large tiger would come each day and leisurely sit outside the entrance to his cave. (Up until the 1970's, the sighting of tigers was relatively common in this jungle mountain region). To this day, though with less frequency, tigers continue to live upon the mountain plateau of Sapta Shringi. (In Hindu mythological iconography, the Goddess is depicted riding upon a tiger).

Nagendra Cave, Sapta Shringi

Laxman lived simply. He ate a bowl of rice when offered; otherwise, he plucked the leaves off the trees and ate the fruit of the rumbad (fig tree). For reasons of dietary variation, he filtered and ate the nutrient-rich mud from the bottom of the nearby pond (kund). Laxman spent his time in meditation; in the chanting of the names (mantras) of the Divine Mother; once a day visiting the Devi at her temple precinct; and in the collecting of food and water to feed the local cows. As a result of the mountain's geographic isolation, Laxman was relatively undisturbed by visitors. Not more than a handful of spiritual seekers undertook the arduous four and one half hour climb, by way of dry creek beds and steep ravines up the mountain-side.

Those days, months, and years of spiritual austerity (tapasya) were designed to awaken the kundalini shakti. **2**

During the medieval period, prior to the coming of the jungle peoples (adivasi's), Sapta Shringi was frequented by a sect belonging to the Tantric Order. **3**

The Siddha /Nath Yogis were followers of the 11th century founder, the Siddha Gorakshanath. For centuries, 'Sapta Shringa' was a pivotal spiritual centre for the Siddha/Naths, it's earth being so sacred that no person was permitted to urinate or defecate upon the mountain home of the Goddess. **4**

In the 13th century, Jnanesvar, a Siddha/Nath of great repute wrote an apocryphal work 'Jnanesvari', a Song-Sermon upon the Bhagavad-Gita'. Jnanesvar makes reference to 'the holy mountain of 'Sapta Shringa', and its significance to the lineage of the Siddha/Nath yogis. Laxman was familiar with the life and writings of Jnanesvar, and the historical relationship between the Siddha/Nath tradition and the sacred mountain of 'Sapta Shringa'. **5**

2,3,4,5 Refer to Notes

Chapter Two

BABAJI

MEETING THE GURU

Sometime in 1956, a friend suggested to Laxman, (now commonly known as Babaji), that he descend the mountain to meet a highly regarded Swami (a celibate monk) staying in a tiny nearby hamlet called Suki. Upon reaching Suki, Babaji found the said Swami surrounded by a large group of devotees. He sat down on the ground at some distance from the Swami. On the instruction of the Swami, the devotees stood and approached Babaji with reverence, each touching his feet with their forehead. Touching the feet of a sadhu is both a sign of great respect, and a boon to the devotee, as kundalini shakti is believed to flow strongly from the extremities of the body of an accomplished yogi i.e. the hands; the feet; and the crown of the head.

The Swami indicated that he wanted Babaji to stay when the other devotees left. In the ensuing discussion, Babaji discovered that they were both born in neighbouring villages, a few kilometres apart, in the south-west State of Karnataka. They enjoyed conversing in the local dialect of Malayalam. Deep within Babaji's heart, he knew he had finally met his Sadguru (true guru). He asked the Swami to accept him as his disciple, and placed before him an offering (dakshina) of the few coins he possessed. The Swami returned the coins, casually lent over, and pressed his fingers into the eyeballs of his newly accepted disciple.

In that very instance, Babaji saw a brilliant shimmering light before his eyes. His mind merged with that 'light', and he entered into deep meditative absorption (samadhi). The Swami recited the sacred mantra 'Om Namah Shivaya' ('I bow to Shiva, who is my own self') into Babaji's right ear, and instructed him to repeat this mantra with every breath. The Swami told Babaji to return to his mountain abode at Sapta Shringi, saying 'Sapta Shringi is a good place for sadhana' (yogic practice). He instructed Babaji to stay there until he was called to Ganeshpuri, the place of the Swami's ashram, some four hours north-east of Mumbai. Babaji continued his sadhana for the next seven years, visiting his Guru every three years or so, staying for two or three days, then returning to his beloved Sapta Shringi.

Over a period of seven years, Babaji continued his tapas (yogic discipline). Gradually, his latent spiritual potential unfolded as a consequence of receiving the 'grace' of the Nivasini Devi through the spiritual vision (darshan) of Her 18-armed form. He had also found his Sadguru and received his 'grace' (anugraha) through the process of shaktipat diksha. Through personal effort (sadhana), and the 'grace' of his Guru and Devi, Babaji attained the rare achievement of the state of a Siddha Purusha (a God-realized soul). 'Ego-limited' consciousness had been transformed into that of Universal Consciousness.

Released from the dictates of the personal ego, Babaji lived in harmony with himself; with his fellow human beings; and with God (Bhagwan). He attained the state known as moksha, the liberation of the soul from recurring cycle of birth, death and rebirth (samsara), the cause of all human suffering.

During these years of sadhana, Babaji's Guru, Swami Muktanananda Saraswati became widely recognized throughout India and the world. Muktananda became known as a great Siddha Yogi, a rare exponent of shaktipat, the direct transmission of bio-energetic 'life-force' energy (shakti) transmitted from guru to disciple. Swami Muktananda spent the1970's until the early 80's establishing hundreds of ashrams and meditation centres

throughout the western world in the name of the Siddha Yoga Foundation. During this time, he initiated many thousands of westerners into direct spiritual experience through the process of shaktipat diksha (spiritual initiation through the transmission of shakti). Muktananda took mahasamadhi (the final, conscious departing of the soul from the physical body) in 1982.

Chapter Three

BABAJI

SANNYAS : Monkhood

In common with many enlightened figures throughout history, including the Gautama Buddha, a decision had to be made by Babaji, whether to remain in the state of an abstracted universal consciousness (samadhi), or to return to at least partial world-consciousness in order to be of selfless service to humanity. Babaji was a poor, lone sadhu living upon an isolated mountain. Other than his Guru, few were aware of his spiritual stature. It was Swami Muktananda's wish for Babaji to fulfil his worldly destiny by playing an active role within the broader community.

Repeatedly, he requested Babaji to take sannyas diksha (initiation) into the Saraswati Order (one of the Ten Orders of Hindu monkhood established in the 8th century by the Hindu reformist philosopher, Shankaracharya).

For three years, Babaji flatly refused his guru's wish, stating 'What does sannyas have to do with Bhagavan (God)? It's not as though you find God if you shave your head'. (Storytellers, Saints, and Scoundrels, Narayan, K, pg. 55). Swami Muktananda did not disagree with this position, but continued to press the point that the acceptance of the formal title of 'Swami' would enhance Babaji's standing in the community, and assist in his work of 'selfless service'.

It was 1962 when Babaji finally acceded to his Guru's wish. He was initiated into the Saraswati Order by the Mahamandeleswar (The Principle of the Dashnami Sannyas Order) at Nasik City. The colour of the cloth he wore changed from white to ochre, and his head was shorn of all hair. No longer was he known by the birth-name, Laxman. The Mahamandeleswar named him Swami Prakashananda Saraswati ('the Bliss of Self-Illumination') in recognition of his illuminated state of God-Consciousness.

During the mid 1970's until 1982, Swami Muktananda was travelling the world giving direct experience of meditation through the spiritual process known as shaktipat. Due to his long absences from India, Swamiji beseeched his disciple, Swami Prakahananda, to accept the gadi (seat of authority) at his ashram at Ganeshpuri. He also extended an invitation to Babaji to visit America. Babaji refused the first request on the grounds that he did not feel suited to the political intrigues of a large ashram 'giving lectures to educated people like doctors and lawyers'. With typical humility coupled with worldly acumen, he told his Guru, 'A flower garland only has value on account of the flowers; the moment they wither it is thrown away. You are the flowers and I am the string and in the event of you not being present, I would be tossed aside' (Agaram Bagaram Baba, Foster.T, pg.35).

Swami Prakashananda Saraswati (Sannyas Initiation)

Babaji had little interest in travelling to America on the grounds that 'a rock is a rock, and a tree is a tree wherever

it may be. It may be bigger or smaller, but it is still a rock and it is still a tree'. He did however accede to visit the Ganeshpuri ashram every three months for up to three days.

Chapter Four

BABAJI

SAPTA SHRINGI ASHRAM

Over time, a small ashram began to thrive upon the Sapta Shringi mountain. The blue-stone ashram and school built by Babaji, accommodated 60 or so children from surrounding districts, aged between 5 and 14 years. He employed a qualified school-teacher to supervise the children's education. In addition, ashram staff fed up to 60 village children three times a day within the ashram precincts. At any one time, the ashram staff consisted of three or four sannyasi monks and/or sadhus, a couple of long-term western disciples, and assisted by a handful of male and female local villagers.

Babaji's first and longest serving disciple, Swami Omananda Saraswati (Om Baba) was always near by. Om Baba, an Indian Army Sergeant in the years before and since Independence, first visited Babaji at Sapta Shringi in 1955. He visited regularly, staying for a night or two, until he permanently located to Sapta Shringi in 1962.

Shree Gurudev Ashram was managed by a Board of Trustees consisting of devotees from Nasik, and Mumbai (Bombay). Besides the daily responsibilities of running a busy ashram and a school, Babaji spent his days receiving visitors and guests; locals and foreigners, the rich and poor, seeking advice and instruction on all matters, mundane and spiritual. Every day individuals and families entered the ashram gates to spend time in the company of an authentic holy man. At any one time, groups of between five to twenty five persons sat at the feet of Babaji imbibing the conviviality and love that flowed freely from his presence. At times such as Guru Purnima (the annual celebration in honour of the Guru) hundreds of devotees would travel from many parts of India to pay their respects to Babaji.

Characteristically, on any day one would find Babaji, unshaven, bare-chested (other than a mala of huge rudraksha beads around his neck), seated on a low stone step inside the upper end of the small semi-darkened hall with a faded ochre-coloured lungi (a piece of cloth) casually wrapped around his generous waist. Laughing and joking to the amusement of all present, his engaging tales were regularly interrupted by the urgency of ridding himself of the large wad of chewing tobacco causing excessive salivation. Informality was the order of the day. Each person felt they were a beloved member of his extended family. When it was time to leave, visitors left reluctantly, feeling regenerated in spirit, and with a peaceful heart overflowing with love.

Babaji was an avuncular man with a contagious, wry sense of humour. He was a master 'story- teller' enthralling his listeners for up to three hours at a stretch with folkloric and traditional stories taken from sacred epics such as the Puranas and Ramayana. These epic tales of 'righteous' and 'unrighteous' deeds are populated by a caste of hundreds – Kings, Queens, Ministers of Government, servants, holy men, demons, god-monkeys, and heavenly beings.

The stories were told in Babaji's own idiosyncratic style interspersed by personal interpolations drawn from his broad life-experience. The audience were from a broad cross-section of society – politicians, government servants, rickshaw drivers, housewives, farmers, hoteliers, swamis, and a sprinkling of foreigners of every nationality.

The stories arose spontaneously in response to the particular 'needs' of a listener and each story was charged with

metaphorical import. Babaji would not repeat the story twice therefore it required the listener to be attentive to the personal message concealed within the metaphor.

One such story illustrative of the above, directed toward 'an educated' foreign visitor, went as follows: 'Suppose you and I are walking on the road. You have gone to university and I haven't studied anything. We're walking. Some child has shit on the road. We both step in it. 'That's shit!' I say. I scrape my foot; it's gone. But educated people have doubts about everything. You say, 'What is this?!' and you rub your foot against the other'. He (Swamiji) rubbed the right sole against the left ankle. 'Then you reach down to feel what it could be,' his fingers now explored the ankle. A grin was breaking over his face. "Something sticky!' You lift some up and sniff it. Then you say, 'Oh, this is shit'. The hand which had vigorously rubbed his nose was flung out in a gesture of disgust. Everyone present in the room was laughing uncontrollably. I (the educated foreigner), managed an uncomfortable smile. Swami continued, 'Educated people always doubt everything. They lie awake at night thinking, 'What was that? Why did it happen? What is the meaning and cause of it? Uneducated people pass judgement and walk on. They get a good night's sleep' (Introduction, Storytellers, Saints, and Scoundrels, Narayan.K)

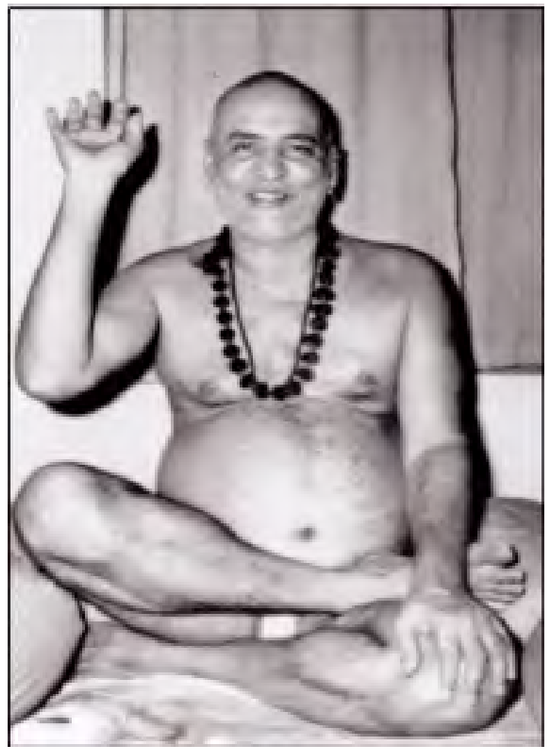
Babaji identified with the state of sannyasa and lived a simple life truly befitting of a sannyasi monk ('sannyasa' translates as one who has renounced the world, its possessions and attachments). He ate simple food, and wore faded ochre coloured cloth. His sole possession was the land within the ashram grounds upon which his small hut (kutir) was situated. Babaji occasionally reflected upon the fact that the Board of Trustees, the legal owners of Shree Gurudev Ashram, if they so wished, at any time could ask him to leave the ashram grounds. He commented that if so requested, he would have no choice but to leave. This situation did not eventuate. His purpose in raising this matter was to emphasize that no matter who you might be, all things material are transient by nature. Despite Swami Prakashananda being regarded as a 'Man of God' to hundreds if not thousands of devotees, he lived his life with profound humility.

Swami Prakashananda's persona was of a loving, humorous and unpretentious man. All who met him could not but be affected by his compassion toward all living beings. Those lacking sufficient discrimination mistook him for a simple, loving old man – akin to everybody's favourite grandfather.

For the more discerning, Swami Prakashanada was a great Siddha (a God-Realized Being), surrounded by the full array of siddhis (psychic powers).

A touch, word, look, or thought could ignite a person's latent 'spiritual energy' (kundalini shakti) bringing about a profound shift of consciousness away from an 'ego-based' reality to the experience of a heightened consciousness of a transpersonal, universal nature --- the experience of unlimited love for mankind and a Oneness with all things.

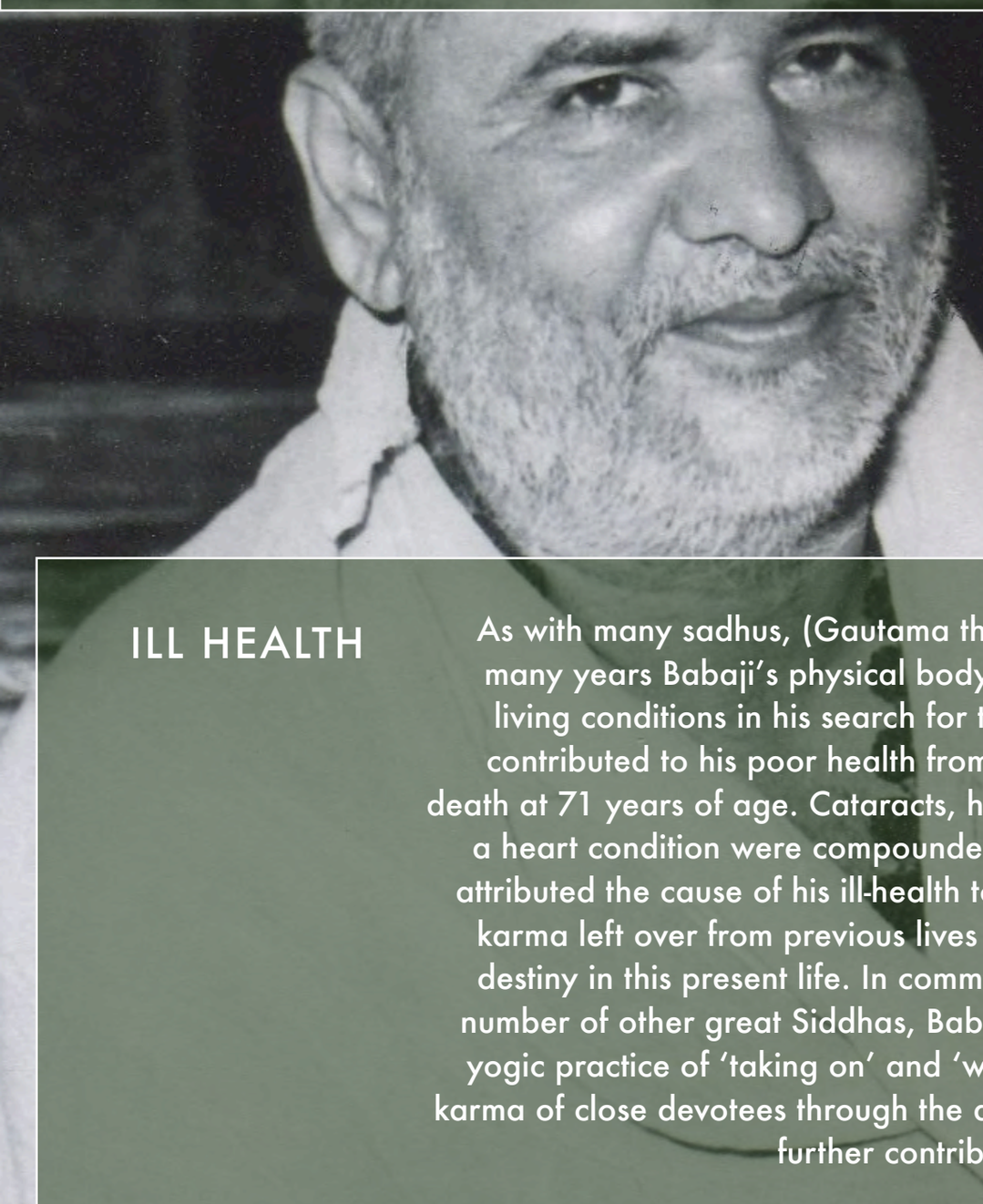
Those fortunate enough to earn his 'grace' (anugraha) came to know the true nature of Swami Prakashananda. A blazing column of scintillating 'light', the awesome manifestation of his subtle body (sukshma sarira), extended its luminosity in every direction, transporting the mind of the recipient to a state of ecstatic bliss (ananda).



Swami Prakashananda Saraswati (Babaji)

Chapter Five

BABAJI



ILL HEALTH

As with many sadhus, (Gautama the Buddha included), for many years Babaji's physical body was subjected to harsh living conditions in his search for the Ultimate Reality. This contributed to his poor health from around 60 years to his death at 71 years of age. Cataracts, high blood pressure, and a heart condition were compounded by acute diabetes. He attributed the cause of his ill-health to prarabhda karma, the karma left over from previous lives which appears as one's destiny in this present life. In common with Gautama and a number of other great Siddhas, Babaji partook in the mystic yogic practice of 'taking on' and 'working-out' the negative karma of close devotees through the agency of his own body, further contributing to his poor health.

By 1980, Babaji's health had deteriorated to such an extent that it necessitated him leaving the austere living conditions of Sapta Shringi for the relative comfort of Nasik City, some 40 kilometres to the south. Shree Gurudev Ashram (named in honour of his guru, Swami Muktananda) was placed in the hands of his ever-faithful disciple, Swami Omamanda Saraswati (Om Baba).

Om Baba pledged to continue the education and feeding of the ashram and village children. He kept his promise up until his death in 2008. To this very day, the school continues to provide education from primary school age to Year 10, under the auspices of the Education Department of Maharashtra. For a period of forty two years, Om Baba tirelessly served Babaji in the running of Shree Gurudev Ashram.

Swami Omananda Saraswati (Om Baba)

Upon leaving Sapta Shringi for Nasik, Swami Prakashananda lived in a two-roomed bungalow built for him by husband and wife devotees, the Khalkers'. The bungalow was next to Muktidham, a well-known, large, gaudy temple complex in Nasik, complete with animated gods, goddess', and talking saints. It was ironic that such an illustrious 'Man of God' lived in such humble circumstances, and was known by relatively few, whilst right next door hundreds flocked to worship plaster-cast replicas of 'talking' gods and animated saints housed in the gaudy pomp of Muktidham.

Despite deteriorating health, Babaji continued to make himself available to visitors (darshan), regaling them with his 'wisdom stories'. Due to easy accessibility more and more visitors came to visit the simple two-room bungalow at Nasik.

Babaji always enjoyed cooking, not for its own sake, but for the express purpose of serving prasad (food dedicated to God) to whoever was present. His attitude toward food was one of 'Annapurna Brahma' ('Food is God'). The daily feeding of visitors was an act of divine love. He described the preparation and the serving of food to visitors as being 'medicine for the soul'.

For many years, the Khalkers' had been close devotees of Babaji. It is they who had built the two-roomed bungalow

for Babaji. The Khalkers' resided in one half of the building, and Babaji in the other half. Whilst Babaji was visiting Mumbai, he received word that Mrs Khalker was seriously burnt when her sari caught fire on the cooking stove. She was admitted to hospital. Babaji reported that when lying on his bed in Mumbai he felt 'two hands reach out and clasp his feet in an act of total surrender' (Agaram Bagaram Baba, Foster.T pg.44). Shortly after, news came that Mrs Khalker had died of her injuries. Babaji returned to the two-roomed bungalow in Nasik, and proceeded to undertake a lengthy fast. His body weakened considerably during the first week, raising blood-pressure levels, and exasperating his diabetes condition. His doctors implored him to eat properly, otherwise he would surely die. For a couple of weeks Babaji refused all food. Then to appease the attendant doctors, he began eating a few sweet biscuits and drinking black tea – not exactly food to restore good health!

Despite his poor physical condition, but in keeping with his reverential attitude toward food, on occasion, Babaji would ask a particular devotee to feed him by hand – to feed him handfuls of grapes and sweet biscuits until his mouth overflowed with food. Lying on his bed, mouth open wide like a hungry infant, he would encourage the devotee to stuff his mouth full of food until not another morsel could fit in. In response to the doctors' dietary concerns, particularly in light of his diabetes, Babaji simply stated, 'It is not poison. This is medicine. It is given (by the devotee) with love. It is good'. As a mother is consumed by feelings of love in the feeding of her child, the devotee felt likewise in the feeding of Babaji.

Swami Muktanananda had sent a message from America imploring his much-loved disciple to resume eating properly. Some weeks later Babaji resumed regular eating, stating 'Mrs Khalker is all right now'. Mrs Khalker's soul (atman) had been freed of its karmic debts. Like many great Siddhas before him, Swami Prakashananda interceded in the 'after-death' journey of a loved one through the sacrificial offering of his own body in an 'act of penance' (tapasya) in order to release the soul of the devotee from its karmic ties to the material world. Swami Prakashananda frequently used the analogy of the ever-vigilant shepherd who watches over his flock, but unlike the shepherd, Babaji's vigilance extended far beyond the life of the mortal coil.

As previously mentioned, Babaji refused Swami Muktananda's request to take the gadi (seat of authority) at his ashram, Siddha Yoga Peeth, Ganeshpuri. By the early 1980's, Swami Muktananda suffered a series of life-threatening coronary attacks. He held a number of private meetings with Babaji to discuss whom he should appoint as his successor. Initially, Babaji suggested Swami Pranavananda Saraswati, a recognized Siddha, and a

favourite, long-time disciple of Swami Muktananda. Swami Pranavananda was a guru-brother (gurubhai) of Babaji, affectionately referred to as 'little brother'. Swami Pranavanada declined the offer on similar grounds to which Babaji had earlier declined. Babaji then suggested another long-time disciple of Swami Muktananda, and a recognized Siddha, named Swami Mukundananda. Swami Mukundananda, a close friend of Babaji's, was by nature a reserved, private man temperamentally not inclined to head-up a large institution such as the Siddha Yoga Foundation.

After much discussion between Swami Muktananda and Swami Prakashananda, in 1982, Subhash Shetty (later known as Swami Nityananda) was formally appointed by Muktanananda as his successor. In May 1982, Subhash's elder sister, Malti Shetty, (later known as Swami Chidvilasanada) was appointed as 'co-successor' along with her brother. Swami Muktananda and Swami Prakashananda agreed that despite their relative youth, over time, Subhash and Malti would grow in spiritual stature. Also, their youth would ensure the longevity of the Siddha Yoga Foundation. In October 1982, Swami Muktananda took mahasamadhi (a yogi's death – the final exit from the physical body taken in full consciousness). Upon his passing, the newly ordained Swami Nityananda (not to be confused with Swami Muktananda's Guru, Baba Nityananda), along with his sister Swami Chidvilasanada, assumed full responsibility for the global SYDA foundation.

Following the passing of Swami Muktananda, with tears in his eyes, Babaji proclaimed to those around him, 'He (Swamiji) has not gone anywhere. He is not the body. He's still here with us (in our hearts).' Swami Prakashanada regarded death as an intimate 'friend'. The death of the physical body was as natural as a branch falling from a tree. The cycle of life is without end. Death follows birth as irrevocably as re-birth follows death. Upon the demise of a Sapta Shringi villager, Babaji was in the habit of collecting those around him and leading them to the specific location of where the person's soul (atman) had left their physical body. He would sit in silent respect for a few moments, then proclaim with great relish, 'See, he is no longer. He is gone. We are not this body'.

Chapter Six

BABAJI

AUSTRALIA

One morning in December 1984, Babaji awoke and said, 'I want to go to Pert'. Those present were confused. 'Pert, where is Pert?' To put this in context, on many occasions over the previous 20 years, Swami Prakashananda had been offered 'around-the-world' trips to New York, London, Paris, wherever he wished. His stock answer was 'why should I go anywhere? A tree is a tree, and a rock is a rock, wherever I go. There is nothing out there I need. I am happy where I am'. Therefore, for him to express a wish to travel anywhere outside of India was unexpected, particularly in light of his poor health.

Anyway, where was 'Pert?' It was quickly ascertained that he was referring to 'Perth', Western Australia. True, many foreigners had met Babaji at his Guru's ashram, or with ever increasing numbers at Nasik. Yet, the majority of these foreigners came from major cities in Europe or America. So why 'Pert'? Albeit, there was a small sprinkling of devotees he referred to as 'friends' living in the small city of Perth. At the end of the day, he chose 'Pert' for reasons known only to him.

Travel outside of India was not so easy. There were passports to obtain, and there were serious health concerns. Babaji decided to travel for up to six weeks, a far lengthier time than medically recommended. The trip to Australia was sponsored by Mrs Halpern (Mirabai), a loving devotee and a long-time disciple of Swami Muktananda. On Babaji's passport application, 'Swami Muktanananda Saraswati' was named as his biological father. When Immigration Officers questioned him about this, Babaji replied, 'a sadhus father is his Guru. He is my true father'. They granted him the passport.

Due to the tarnished image of 'Gurudom' in the west, Babaji felt the need to inform the Customs Officers that 'I am not here to make money or to give public lectures. I am here only to stay with friends in their houses'. Babaji chose to clothe himself in his faded ochre cloth, loosely tied around his ample waist, bare from the waist up, other than large mala beads around his neck, and a shawl casually thrown over one shoulder. The Custom Officers were intrigued and disarmed by the unpretentious manner of this humble, unshaven, elderly man of dignified mien.

Accompanying Babaji to Australia was Titus Foster (Harihar), his English translator, and his medical attendant, Dr. Rao.

Babaji had agreed to visit Perth on the sole condition that there was to be no advertising or public lectures.

True to his word, he came 'to stay with friends'.

Babaji resided at Mrs Halpern's, and visited 'friends' in their suburban homes.
He sat in the company of forty or fifty other 'friends' who visited daily. Babaji's 'wisdom stories' touched the hearts and minds of those present. His presence (shakti) spread waves of boundless love and compassion throughout the room. Tears of love and joy were shed frequently. Those present knew that to be in the company of Swami Prakashananda was to be in the presence of a true Master, a 'Man of God'.

Babaji's ongoing fascination with 'death' extended to his own death. Much to the alarm of his Australian sponsors,

Babaji frequently referred to his own immanent death. He exhorted those around him that upon his death 'throw me in the ocean so the fish can eat me'. Babaji was reminded that burials of this nature were not legally sanctioned in Australia. Fortunately for all concerned, Babaji did not die in Australia!

Prior to the Australian visit, Babaji had moved from Khalker's bungalow in Nasik to occupy a three-roomed apartment on the second story of Rajhans' Private Hospital. Upon his return from Australia to India, Babaji's health had deteriorated to such an extent that it was no longer safe for him to travel any distance. Despite his ill health, Babaji's daily routine remained unchanged. He arose around 3.30 am, bathed, and then sat quietly listening to a tape of his Guru, Swami Muktananda singing an ancient chant, 'the Guru Gita', which describes the mysterious workings of the Guru. Following breakfast, visitors would begin arriving at around 10am and stay to midday. Afternoon visiting hours commenced around 2pm. At 5.00pm, forty or fifty children from the local vicinity would arrive to sing bhajans (chants); to be fed (prasad); and on occasion, to be given clothing. Toward the end of Babaji's life, an ever increasing number of spiritual seekers, Indian and foreign, filled the small hall at Rajhan's Private Hospital.

Swami Prakashananda (Babaji) near Perth, W.A. (photo courtesy of Titus Foster, 'Agaram Bagaram Baba', North Atlantic Books)

Chapter Seven

BABAJI

MAHASAMADHI

On the evening of the 10th of June, 1988, following the children's bhajan program, as usual, Babaji entered his room. There he experienced severe chest pains. By the time Dr.Rao and his wife reached him, he told them, 'There's nothing anyone can do for me now'. With his final breath, and in full consciousness, Swami Prakashananda Saraswati was released from his physical form (mahasamadhi) into the waiting arms of the Universal Mother.

Babaji's physical body was carried from Nasik back to the mountain abode of his Beloved Mother, the 18-Armed Nivasini Devi, at Sapta Shringi. Following the sacred rites befitting a mahatma (great soul), the body was carried to his 9' x 9' x 9' hut (kutir). It was interred in the small meditation space situated under his bed. Barely large enough for one person to sit in, for many years this small space served as his meditation cave, into which he periodically withdrew for a day or two. Babaji's body was seated upright, and positioned in the cross-legged, yogic posture of siddhasana (half-lotus). Devotees throughout the world were notified of his passing. Seventeen days later on 27th June 1988, hundreds of devotees, disciples and friends gathered together in a spirit of celebration in respectful acknowledgment of the departing of a great Mahatma (Great Soul).

Throughout the day and night, the sound of the chanting of 'Om Namo Bhagavate Prakashanandaya' (I bow to God in the form of Self-Illumination) echoed across the mountain valley. Siddhas, sannyasi monks (including the Mahamandaleshwar of Nasik), sadhus, devotees, and disciples from various parts of India and abroad converged to rejoice in a life that had blessed so many with the gift of unconditional love. Several thousand people were fed at the conclusion of the day in honour of Babaji's attitude toward food, 'Annapurna Brahma' ('Food is God').

Nowadays, a life-sized statue of Swami Prakashananda made of gold, silver, copper and bronze, sits in a crossed-legged position, with right-hand raised in a gesture of blessing, upon a black marble stone platform. The statue is housed within a steeple-roofed, square shaped, marble temple situated at the foot of the three hundred stone-step pathway leading to the temple door of the Nivasini Devi. The statue is placed above the meditation cave within which Babaji's body was interred.

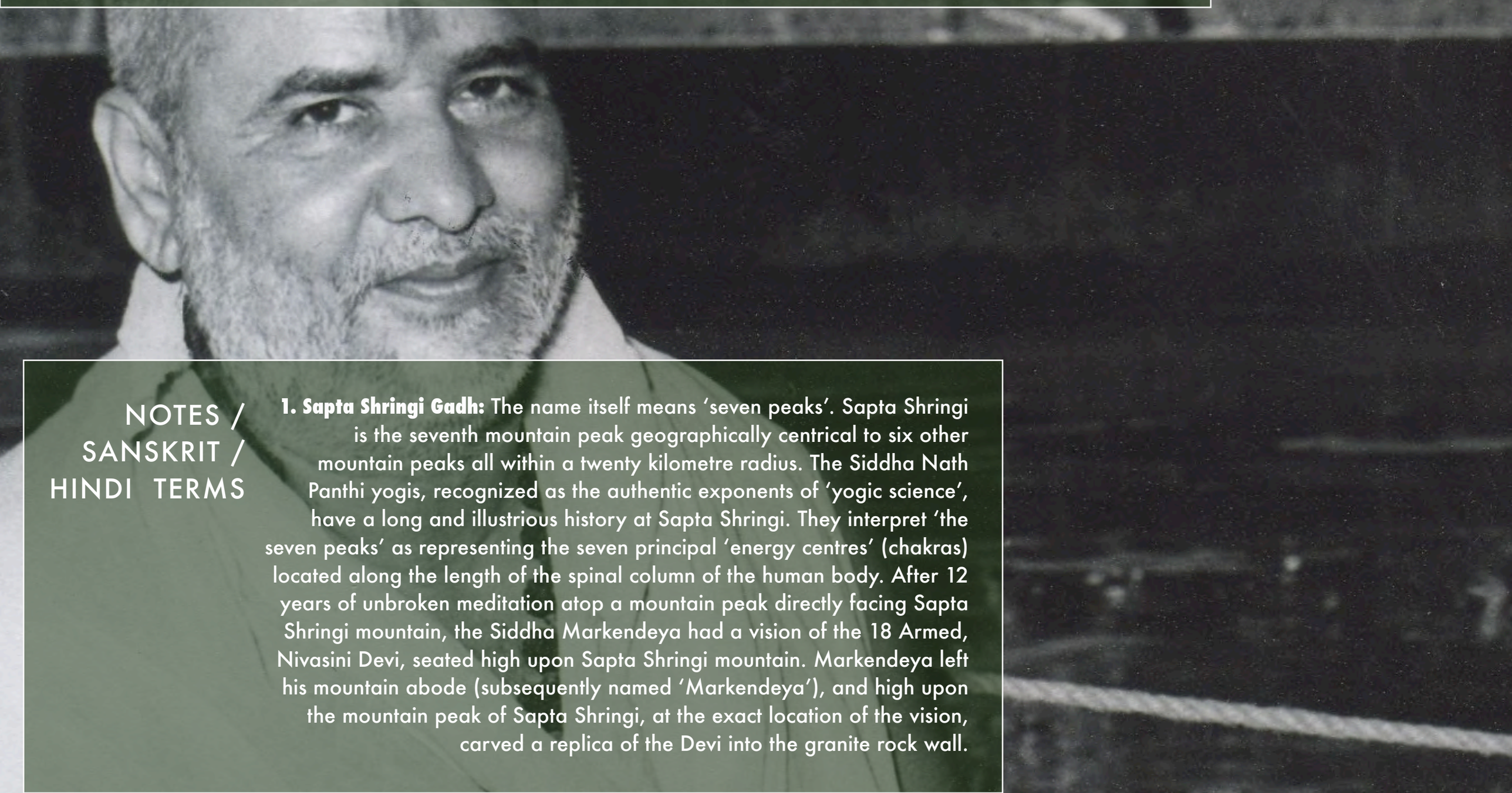
Swami Prakashananda (Babaji) Samadhi Statue

The Siddha once known and loved as Swami Prakashananda Saraswati (Babaji) was no more. His spirit

now lives in deathless eternity seated at the feet of his beloved Mother.

Glossary

BABAJI



NOTES / SANSKRIT / HINDI TERMS

1. Sapta Shringi Gadh: The name itself means ‘seven peaks’. Sapta Shringi is the seventh mountain peak geographically centrical to six other mountain peaks all within a twenty kilometre radius. The Siddha Nath Panthi yogis, recognized as the authentic exponents of ‘yogic science’, have a long and illustrious history at Sapta Shringi. They interpret ‘the seven peaks’ as representing the seven principal ‘energy centres’ (chakras) located along the length of the spinal column of the human body. After 12 years of unbroken meditation atop a mountain peak directly facing Sapta Shringi mountain, the Siddha Markendeya had a vision of the 18 Armed, Nivasini Devi, seated high upon Sapta Shringi mountain. Markendeya left his mountain abode (subsequently named ‘Markendeya’), and high upon the mountain peak of Sapta Shringi, at the exact location of the vision, carved a replica of the Devi into the granite rock wall.

Oral tradition maintains that the original sculptured image still remains intact. Unfortunately, only the brahmin priests can attest to the truth or otherwise, as only they are permitted to be in its presence. In current times, the general public has access to a large plaster-caste form of an awry, red coloured, wide-eyed, green sari-wearing,18 Armed Goddess, the Nivasini Devi.

2. Kundalini Shakti: Yogis claim that within the human body at the base of the spine lies a bio-energetic 'life-force' energy called kundalini shakti. The word 'kund' means 'coiled', referring to the energy lying dormant in the form of a coiled, sleeping snake. In terms of cosmological evolution, kundalini shakti is the cosmic creative energy left over from the primordial process involved in the creative act of generating the world of form and matter. When repeatedly 'struck' through 'the churning' process of yogic practice – yoga postures (asanas); internal blocks and seals (bandhas & mudras); breath regulations (pranayamas); and mind concentrations (pratyaharas/dharanas), it is said that 'the sleeping snake' 'awakens'. She uncoils Herself, straightens 'like a rod', and then 'like a snake entering a hole', (ref: Hatha Yoga Pradipika), enters the principal medial channel (the sushumna) for the flow of bio-energetic 'life-force' energy (kundalini shakti). Kundalini shakti travels the length of the sushumna from the base of the spine to the cerebral cortex.

The sushumna does not belong to the gross material body, but to 'the subtle body' (suksma sarira). It is concealed within the cerebro-spinal column. The sushumna itself, and the movement of this bio-energetic energy (kundalini shakti) are only to be perceived through inner sensory perception. Upon reaching the brain, kundalini shakti causes the release of highly refined and potent neuro-chemical substances resulting in extra-sensory illumination, accompanied by ecstatic bliss beyond description. In that singular moment individualized existence is subsumed into a universal experience of Oneness with the All. It is in that moment of union that mystics are known to cry 'I am God' (Aham Brahmasmi).

3. Tantric philosophy, in tandem with the findings of contemporary physics, posits that the universe is a single gigantic 'energy-field' of differing degrees of density from the quanta (the smallest unit of energy) to the density of gross matter, which we refer to as the material world, and the human body. That the processes involved in the infinite cycle of the creation, sustenance and destruction of universe are in play in the giving birth to, sustaining of, and dissolving of, human form. The tantrics claim that a portion of the sub-atomic 'energies' responsible for the creation of the world of matter, lie concealed in a dormant state, in subtle form, within 'the subtle body' of the human being, situated at the base of the spine. Paracelcus, the 16th

century alchemist and chemist, one of the founding fathers' of modern chemistry, turned the phrase, 'as above, so below'. The physical world of matter is an outcome of the devolvement or constriction process of universal 'energy-fields', ipso facto, the world of matter, of which 'man' is a part, is likewise subject to the very same universal cosmic laws, only in microcosmic form. The dictum 'as above, so below' has been verified by contemporary science. Quantum physics tells us that the universe is replicated in every single atom. To quote an eastern analogy, 'The air inside a ceramic jar is identical to the air outside the jar. Only when the jar is broken does any apparent distinction cease'.

Based upon the above principles, for tantric yogis, the human body is a laboratory for experimental research. If the psycho-physiological forces of the microcosmic human body are a direct outcome of the play of the unfolding of universal processes, then mastery over the human energy system promised access to universal realms of existence. Through personal exploration, and specific methodologies, the yogis of yore achieved mastery over the human energy system via psycho-physical practices. The core discovery was that concealed within the human body, lying dormant at the base of the spinal column was an unlimited supply of conscious 'energy' of a universal nature (kundalini shakti). Through specific practices, this package of 'energy' could be released from its material confinement within the human body, in order for it to assume its natural state as unlimited universal energy. The release of kundalini shakti was accompanied by such an expansion of consciousness that the practitioner truly entered into 'the realm of the gods'.

4. The Siddha/Nath yogis: The lineage (parampara) of Siddha/Nath yogis is described as such: 'On the mountain of Saptoshringa that Matsyendranath meet the crippled Chauranginath ('the nine broken-limbed'), who at once became whole in all his limbs. This secret wisdom was then conveyed by Matsyendranath to Gorakshanath, who had a great desire to enjoy undisturbed contemplation. The great Matsyendranath enthroned on the highest place of contemplation Gorakshanath, who was like a lake of lotuses in the form of yoga and valiant in the destruction of sensual desires. Then Gorakshanath transmitted to Shri Gahininath the glory of the incomparable joy, with all its power received from Shankara. When he saw that Kali (the goddess of destruction) was persecuting all creatures, Gahininath gave this command to Nivrittinath. That great teaching has come down to us from Shankara, the Great Guru, through the tradition of his disciples' ('Jnanesvari', author, Jnaneswar, stanzas 1730 -1737).

Matsyendranath is acknowledged as the founder of the Siddha/Nath yogic lineage, whilst his disciple,

Gorakshanath, circa 11th century, is acknowledged as its leading proponent. Gorakshanath is also acknowledged as the author of a number of tantric 'hatha yoga' texts, the principal texts being: The Goraksha Gita; The Goraksha Sataka; The Goraksha Paddhati; The Goraksa Siddhanta Samgraha, as well Gorakshanath being the 'inspiration' behind a principal yoga text written around the 14th Century, The Hatha Yoga Pradipika, ascribed to Svatmarama.

5. Jnanesvar: In his magna opus, 'Jnanesvari', the author Jnanesvar, a 13th century Siddha, ascribed special significance to Sapta Shringi in its historical importance to the lineage (parampara) of the tantric Siddha/Nath tradition. Unusual for the time, he wrote the work in the local dialect, Marathi, the language belonging to the Western State of Maharashtra . In 'Jnanesvari', Jnanesvar interprets the essential wisdom of the 'Song of God' (Bhagavad-Gita) from an experiential yogic perspective. Jnanesvar states, 'I do not know when this wisdom was communicated by the god Shiva to the ear of Parvati (his wife) by the shore of the Milky Ocean, but it was found by him (Matsyendranath), who lay concealed within the womb of a fish in the waves of that ocean. On the mountain of Saptoshringa that Matsyendranath meet the crippled Chauranginath ('the nine broken-limbed'), who at once became whole in all his limbs' ('Jnanesvari', stanzas 1730 – 1732).

Jnanesvar was initiated into the Siddha/Nath Order by his elder brother, Nivrittinath. Nivrittinath also initiated the youngest brother, Sopana, and his sister, the great medieval mystic poetess, Mirabai. By the age of 19 years, Jnanesvar had completed his spiritual tour de force, 'Jnanesvari'. Upon its completion, Jnanesvar entered into the highest state of meditation (samadhi), and left his physical body (mahasamadhi). For centuries prior to, and after the birth of Jnanesvar, Sapta Shringi mountain had been regarded as a siddha peeth ('a place of power'), where yogis had practiced advanced yogic austerities (tapasya) since time immemorial.

Terms:

adivasi's (jungle peoples)

Aham Brahmasmi ('I am God')

ananda (the state of ecstatic bliss)

Annapurna Brahma (literally,'Food is God')

anugraha (Divine grace. Transmitted by the Guru through the process of shaktipat diksha)

asanas (yoga postures)

atman (individual soul)

Baba / Babaji (father/revered father)

bandhas (psycho-muscular energy locks applied in yoga practice)

Bhagwan (literally, 'God')

bhajans (simple repetitive chants).

bindu (a central convergent point)

brahman (priestly caste)

chakras (The psychic 'energy centres', principally seven in number, placed along the spinal column, and located within 'the subtle body' of the human being)

Chauranginath (The Master of 'the nine broken-limbed'. A founding father of the Siddha/Nath tantric tradition)

chelas (disciples of a Master or Guru)

dakshina (an offering to a Guru, or to a deity)

darshan (literally, 'the vision of truth')

Dashnami Sannyas (The Ten Orders of Hindu monkhood established in the 8th century by the great Hindu reformist philosopher, Shankaracharya)

dharanas (mind concentrations)

Divali (Festival of Lights celebrated in October/November)
gadh (a mountain plateau)
gadi (seat of authority)

Gorakshanath (The 11th century disciple of Matsyendranath, the founding father of the Siddha/Nath Tantric lineage. Gorakshanath is recognized as the foremost exponent of tantric 'hatha yoga', and the author of a number of important tantric 'hatha yoga' texts)

Guru (dispeller of ignorance, and revealer of Ultimate Reality) gurubhai (spiritual 'brothers' in the service of the same Guru)

Guru Purnima (the annual celebration in honour of the Guru celebrated on the full moon in June/July)

Hindu Tantric Orders (Hindu practitioners of yoga who adhere to the esoteric philosophy that the human body is a microcosmic replica of the macrocosmic universe – 'as above so below')

Jagadamba Mata (Mother of the World) 'Jai Jagadamba Mataki Jay' (Hail to the Mother of the World)

Jnanesvar (13th century author of 'Jnanesvari', a Song-Sermon upon the Bhagavad-Gita, written in Marathi, the local language of Maharashtra State, Western India. It is written from the personal perspective of the kundalini yoga process).

Kali (the Goddess of Destruction)
kardhi (kardhi is 'hand-spun' cotton, the weaving of which Mahatma Gandhi utilized as the

symbol for the Indian Independence movement)

karma (the universal principal of 'cause and effect' – 'what you sow is what you reap'. If you perform good actions, you receive positive benefits in return. If you perform bad actions, you receive the like in return)

kund (pond)

kundalini shakti (the latent primal 'life-force' energy stored within 'the subtle body' of the human body, and 'awakened' through intensive yoga/meditation practice. Its symbolic form is that of a three and one half times, coiled, sleeping snake)

kutir (hut)
lungi (a piece of cloth wrapped around the waist)

Mahamandaleshwar (The Principle monk of one of the four principal maths (monastery) of the Dashnami Sannyas Order ('Ten Orders'), founded by the 8th century reformist philosopher, Shankaracharya). These four maths are geographically located in the north, the south, the east and the west of India).

mahasamadhi (literally 'the great ecstasy'. A yogi's death – the final exit of the soul from the confines of the physical body, taken in a state of full consciousness)

mahatmas (great souls)
mantra repetition (repetition in Sanskrit of the names of God)

Matsyendranath ('Lord of the Fish', Guru of Gorakshanath, and the founder of the Siddha/Nath lineage of tantric yogis)

moksha (final liberation from 'the wheel of births and deaths')
mudras (psycho-physical seals/gestures applied in meditation practice)

Muktidham (a large, popular gaudy temple complex in Nasik, complete with animated gods, goddess', and talking saints)

murti (image of a deity)

Nagendra ('Lord of Snakes' - the semi-mythical snake with the head of a human being)

Nivasini Devi (the Goddess of 18 Arms located at Sapta Shringi Gadh)

nivritti (to return to the Source)

Nivrittinath (A famous 13th century Siddha of the Siddha/ Nath tradition, Jnanesvar's elder brother and Guru)

'Om Namah Shivaya' ('I bow to Shiva'. A seed (bija) mantra of the Saivite/Siddha/Nath tradition)

Paracelcus (the 16th century alchemist, a founding father of modern chemistry)

parampara (Uninterrupted succession in 'empowerment' from Guru to disciple in a yogic lineage)

Parvati (Shiva's consort and shakti – the 'creative energy' of the God-Head (Shiva) manifesting as the universe)

Prakashananda ('the Bliss of Self-Illumination') pranayamas (the practice of breath regulations)

prarabhda karma (the composite of mental impressions and behavioural actions carried over from previous lives which appear as 'fate' or 'destiny' in this present life)

prasad (food served as an offering to God)
pratyaharas (the withdrawal of the mind from the five senses)

Puranas (18 ancient sacred texts composed by Vyasa containing mythological stories of 'righteous' and 'unrighteous' acts, populated by a caste of hundreds, Kings, Queens, Ministers of Government, servants, holy men, demons, god-monkeys, and heavenly beings)

Ramayana (ancient Indian epic composed by Valmiki around the life of God Rama, wife Sita, and the monkey-god, Hanuman)

rudraksha beads (small hard nuts from the sacred rudraksha tree)

rudraksha tree (the rarefied South East Asian tree that produces the rudraksha nut, the many- sided, small hard nuts sacred to Shiva, and used as 'prayer beads' ('mala beads') by millions of Hindu devotees throughout Asia)

rumbad (a type of fig tree)

Sadguru (true guru)

sadhana (yogic discipline)

sadhu(s) (seeker(s) of truth)

samadhi (the state of 'ecstasy' experienced in pure consciousness. The final attainment in the yogic process)

samsara (the cycle of birth, death, re-birth) sanatana dharma (eternal values)

sannyas (literally 'dead to the world' in the sense of renunciation of the world and its attachments)

sannyas diksha (initiation into one of the 'Ten Orders' (Dashnami) of Hindu monkhood established in the 8th century by the Hindu reformist philosopher, Shankaracharya)

sapta (literally, 'seven')

Sapta Shringi (literally, the centripetal 'seventh peak'). A famous shakti peeth ('place of power'), surrounded by six other mountains. Sapta Shringi is associated with the Divine Goddess, Nivasini Devi. It is situated 40 kilometres north of Nashik City in North/West Maharashtra State, India)

Saraswati Order (Goddess Saraswati is the goddess of 'knowledge, speech and learning'. One of the 'Ten Orders' (Dashnami) of monkhood established in the 8th century by the Hindu reformist philosopher, Shankaracharya)

satyagraha marches ('truth marches' / non-violent protests organized by Mahatma Gandhi) shakti (universal primal 'life-force' energy)
shaktipat (the transfer of universal 'energy' (shakti) transmitted from Guru to disciple. shaktipat diksha ('initiation' from Guru to disciple through the direct transmission of shakti). shakti peeth ('place of power' associated with the feminine aspect of God)

Shankara (a name given to God Shiva. The Primal yogi) Shankaracharya (the 8th century Hindu reformist philosopher and founder of the Dashnami

Sannyas Order ('Ten Orders') of monkhood) Shiva (the unmoving, transcendent God-Head. The destroyer of the individual ego. The Primal

yogi. The male counter-part of shakti) Shri Gahininath (A 12th century founding father of the Siddha/Nath tantric tradition. A disciple of

Gorakshanath, and the Guru of Nivrittinath) Siddha (a God-Realized human being – a person who has achieved unity with universal

consciousness (samadhi) through the process of meditation) siddhasana (a cross-legged, yogic sitting posture commonly referred to as 'the half-lotus')

Siddha/Nath yogis (the tantric lineage founded by 10th / 11th century Matsyendranath and continued by his successor, Gorakshanath. The Siddha/Nath yogis are regarded as the authentic exponents of 'yogic science')

Siddha Purusha (a God-realized soul) siddhis (psychic powers of which there are traditionally 'seven' in number) sukshma sarira (literally, 'subtle-body' or 'vital energy sheath')

sushumna (the subtle body's principal meridian channel for the flow of bio-energetic 'life-force' energy (kundalini shakti). The sushumna extends the full length of the spinal axis from the base of the spine (the coccyx) into the brain-stem)

Swami/Swamiji (literally, 'Master of the Self'. An honorific title.
tapas (literally 'inner heat'. An 'internal combustion process' achieved through subjecting the

body and mind to yogic discipline (sadhana) to 'awaken' kundalini shakti)
The Guru Gita, (literally, 'Song to the Guru', a Sanskrit text recording the conversation between

Guru Siva and Goddess Parvati, outlining the path to the liberation of the soul (moksha) vairagya (non-attachment or detachment from all material things, including one's ego) yatras (pilgrimage's to holy places) yogis (practitioners of yoga).